PRISM

AN ANGLICAN MONTHLY

March, 1961 Vol. V No. 3 1s. 6d.

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REPENTANCE

PRISM
32 BLOOMSBURY STREET
LONDON, W.C.1
Telephone: MUSeum 3855

Editor:
TIMOTHY BEAUMONT
Editorial Advisory Committee:
DONALD ALLCHIN
ROBIN DENNISTON
CHRISTOPHER MARTIN
ROBIN MINNEY
NICHOLAS MOSLEY

Subscription rates (*post free*):

3 months, 5s.
6 months, 10s.
12 months, 20s.

Prism can be obtained at Church bookshops

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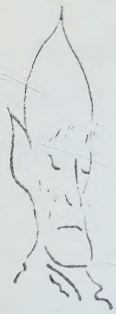
Focus

Most of us have an inferiority complex about Lent. Either we do nothing much about it and feel that we should, or we do something and feel we should be doing something else or something more. We give up sweets but have a guilty feeling that we are really doing it to improve our waistline; we wonder whether we ought to go on a fish diet for six weeks: our Parish Priests tell us to get up half an hour earlier each day and read the Bible, but we do not do it.

The main trouble with Lent is that it is too long. PRISM hereby inaugurates a Society for Reducing Lent to Twenty Days (which would also go halfway towards ridding us of that dreary hymn "Forty Days and Forty Nights").

Meanwhile, what about adopting a suggestion of (I think) Monica Furlong's by skipping Lent altogether and taking Holy Week *really* seriously. Strike these days out of your diary, attend the Eucharist, say the offices, read the Bible, fast, pray and *repent*.

There are many different things to repent of and we talk about some of them in this issue. We can repent of inefficiency at our job (editing PRISM), we can repent of our contribution to the inefficiency of our Church (Eberhard Wedell), we can repent of trying to do good (Valerie Pitt). We can apply different techniques to our repenting and try to be *clear* about the virtues of each. (Note how the truth stated by Nicholas Mosley on page 3 has got distorted by the time it reaches Laywoman on page 25.) But however we do it, it is a primary command. Repentance is an affirmative not a negative action: ashes make good fertiliser.



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Repentance

NICHOLAS MOSLEY

"Repent", says St. Matthew, was the first command of Our Lord's preaching. It was the first cry in John the Baptist's prophecy and the first instruction (before "and be baptised") given to enquirers after St. Peter's Pentecost sermon. It seems a sort of "open sesame" word which has to be understood and carried out before the brick walls keeping one from the Christian life will open.

We are often told that repentance is not a matter of the emotions, over which we have no control, but of the will, where we have freedom. It is because of this that some people find the Sacrament of Penance so important. They know it is almost impossible to decide to feel sorry; but they can get their bodies to certain places at certain times and say certain words that have been worked out in their minds. And by these sacramental acts of repentance they do find usually that the experience (even the "feel") of penitence becomes real to them. But they do not claim that the whole of repentance depends on sacramental confession; if it did, Anglo and Roman Catholics would be better than they are.

Those who do not make use of the Sacrament of Penance often have a stronger view in general of man's helplessness and dependence on the saving act of God. But very few of these would totally deny free will. There has to remain some area (if one is to be a Christian at all) in which man can choose how far he is ready to let God act.

Granted, then, that repentance is not something that you must feel but something that you can do (or "make yourself ready for": the dispute about grace and free-will need concern us no further); and granted, also, that it concerns a general attitude and behaviour in life and not only a use of the Sacrament of Penance; in what terms are this action and this attitude describable? We are good nowadays at saying that repentance is *not* a sinking feeling in the stomach; it is *not* an empty self-abasement. We are not nearly so good at saying what it is.

In the latest book of Teilhard de Chardin to be translated into English* he describes in his original and intensely exciting language the way in which God seems to act in the world and the way in

* *Le Milieu Divin.* Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Collins. 1960.

which man can experience and participate in this action. But in the preface he, too, says that "the soul with which we are dealing is assumed already to have turned away from the path of error". Thus in this most modern theological work as in those at the heart of the Christian religion there is emphasis on the necessity of the act of repentance before the person can become in touch (as it were) with the whole scheme of sanctification and redemption. Teilhard de Chardin is himself not explicit about this act—this is a constant and curious omission in his writing—but he is so explicit and so amazingly profound about man's consequent participation in God's work that he illuminates, by implication, the characteristics of the original repentance. And because his vision is of such unique importance to contemporary Christians in that it both refers to recognisable modern outlooks and yet remains within an orthodox context, this light that his work reflects is worth considering.

> "I can only unite myself to the will of God . . . *when all my strength is spent*, at the point where my activity, fully extended and straining towards betterment (understood in ordinary human terms), finds itself continually counter-weighted by forces tending to halt me or overwhelm me. Unless I do everything I can to advance or resist, I shall not find myself at the *required point*—I shall not submit to God as much as I might have done or as much as he wishes."*

Throughout *Le Milieu Divin* there is this sort of description of the "repented" person—the person who finds himself "at the exact point where the whole sum of the forces of the universe meet together to work in us the effect which God desires". He is a person who, first of all, is *exposed;* who has no barriers around him, who is sensitive and vulnerable to the countless influences of creation. Secondly he is a person of *courage;* who turns to face what is unaccustomed and alarming, who fights with all his strength, who tries always to be ready to meet new demands and new experiences. And all this is to be understood in "ordinary human terms". The battle is not one of inward piety against imaginary inward indiscipline; it is a battle of the whole of a person involved outwardly with the whole of the world.

If these are the characteristics of the penitent person, some guess can be made about the characteristics of the act of repentance. It will be a recognition, first, of something already *there;* something

* Op. cit., p. 73 (italics in original).

(in ordinary human terms) that one is required to face but formerly has not had the courage to face, either from pride or selfishness or fear. It will not be a matter of saying "I am helpless and sorry" in the abstract, but of turning towards some actual demand of experience which, because one will have been tempted not to have turned towards it, will make one experience helplessness and sorrow (as well as struggle) in the concrete. In this it will be like the Sacrament of Penance—it will achieve through sacramental action the experience of contrition that it is impossible to feel directly. It will be an extension of the principle of the single Sacramental act into a series of possible acts throughout the whole of life—which by its nature is sacramental.

Thus also it will be a matter of *learning*—about God's immanence in the world and what exactly is required of oneself as part of it. By God's light inside a man he can pray and listen to his conscience; but it is in the light of what God presents to him outside him that he can repent, because it is only through this that he can act. The act of repentance will be a learning from facts, from evidence, and then behaving in the light of these. It will be a refusal to rely on those parts of a man that are continually tempting him towards stasis and rigidity, and a readiness always to be responsive to the demands of growth and movement. And then it will be the decision or the action itself (the undertaking of some uncongenial task, the righting of some wrong, the giving up of some stultifying reputation or possession) at the point where his willingness to learn and his courage has brought him.

Because the influence and demands upon each person will be different, it is still easier to be explicit about the sort of attitudes that are not repentant than about those that are. A classic example of unrepentance in this sort of definition is that of the Colonel in charge of the police at Sharpeville at the time of the shootings. At the enquiry, after hearing the evidence about the unnecessary killing of seventy people, the Colonel was asked if he had learned anything from the incident. He replied, "We might get better equipment". He was unrepentant in the sense that he had *learned* nothing: the evidence and the facts had been meaningless to him. He preferred his own ideas.

An obvious example of the way in which many Christians dislike facing evidence is for instance their continued distrust of (or at least their lack of interest in) science. The days of the *fracas* about

evolution are fortunately over; but there are still many Christians who seem to fear that factual evidence about God's creation may somehow be destructive of *their* ideas of God's creation; and they choose to prefer their own ideas to God's facts.

Another modern example is the attitude of many people (including Christians) about the death penalty. Here there is a large amount of factual evidence which shows that the death penalty is not a deterrent. This evidence has been collected from a variety of circumstances relevant to almost every situation. And yet people discount this evidence because they say it is "common sense" that the death penalty is a deterrent. By common sense they mean the conviction bred within the closed walls of their imagination.

To become sensitive to, and to learn from, this sort of evidence around one, does not mean that everyone has to be a scientist or sociological expert. The whole point of this understanding of repentance is that a person has to face only what he is confronted with. An expert will be faced with situations for the expert; for the rest, there will be mostly the problems of everyday life. But the point of this idea of repentance is also that God *does* confront us in daily life with what is required from us; and it is by this means that we are brought "to the exact point where the whole sum of the forces of the universe meet together to work in us the effect that God desires".

Since everyone is part of society and most of us part of a family, the usual ways in which we will be confronted by the need for repentance will be through relationships with other people. For a parent the demand will probably be to learn more about his children —to listen, think, discover and sympathise. It is often difficult for an older person to expose himself to the strange demands of other human beings growing at the heart of his life. But just because of this—because it is difficult on his own—if he does it, he will find (again, as in the Sacrament of Penance) not only the terrifying extent of his own responsibility but thus also humility and the extent of his dependence upon God. And a man who shares this burden with God (which is the only possible thing to do) will find that not only is the responsibility bearable, but also that his relationships are a great deal happier than before.

For those who do not have such family relationships there are a hundred others around them. In each there is the demand to *love;* which means just this offering of oneself towards the understanding

of another. And yet how many pious Christian families there are with a statuette in every nook who do not wish to learn about other human beings—who will not read or listen to what is known about children (they dismiss it with—"all that stuff about which way to hold them over pots . . .") just as they do not care about the other facts and evidence of the world around them ("science and politics have nothing to do with religion"). *This* is unrepentance—living in a small enclosed world of one's own creation and refusing to love or even look at God's creation.

Each person has to face outwards from the safety of his magic circle in his own way, and advance to meet whatever particular dragons are there for him to fight and learn from. No one can know another's failures or successes because no one can know what each person is up against. But the importance of this sort of understanding of repentance is that it is something demanded at the beginning of the Christian life; it is not an extra or a luxury for saints. The whole business of turning outwards, learning, listening, sympathising, putting oneself (mentally and physically) in situations which are unaccustomed and demanding—all these are actions without which we are unlikely to be partaking actively in the Christian life at all. There is a sense in which our failures in this effort don't matter; by our nature and the nature of the world we will mostly fail. But it matters very much that we shall have made the effort: for it is by this that the success that we have not ourselves achieved and have not merited is yet extended (even through our failures) both in us and in the world.

The greatest evil is not now done in those sordid "dens of crime" that Dickens loved to paint. It is not done even in concentration camps and labour camps. In those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried, and minuted) in clean, carpeted, warmed and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice.

From "The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast", by C. S. Lewis (Geoffrey Bles, 12/6).

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Inefficiency

EBERHARD WEDELL

One of the mixed blessings enjoyed by Archbishops of Canterbury is that, if they are hale and hearty enough not to die in office, they live to read their own obituary notices and can answer back. It is true that they share this blessing with other public men, but few of these for one reason and another command quite the press coverage given to the recent announcement of Dr. Fisher's retirement.

The notices varied—but in one respect they were unanimous: the Archbishop's claim to fame lay in his administrative ability. He had, so they said, revolutionised the administration of the Church in his time, put clergy stipends on their feet, reorganised the central Church machinery, etc. etc. The Archbishop found it mildly embarrassing to be written off as a super civil servant, and said so. No doubt the last word has not been written on the subject, and it is not the purpose of this article to attempt yet another assessment of the Archbishop's work. But the widespread panegyrics on the administrative condition of the Church of England called forth by his retirement might well be held to indicate that inefficiency in the Church's life is not the most urgent subject for repentance. Indeed some people are saying that we have had quite enough of efficiency, and that what we need is some spirituality.

However this may be, when one talks to intelligent and sensitive people—within the Church and without—one finds that there is probably more uneasiness today than when the tidying up first began. And the people who voice this are not dualists who regard administration as incompatible with holiness. They are people who know from experience that to administer means to do what the word suggests: to *minister to*—and that it is therefore in all its manifestation a proper function for a minister of the Church of God.

These people's anxiety is lest the busyness now apparent in the Church's administrative machine is not really competent administration but that it consists of the piling of one administrative device upon another without the clear-headed sense of purpose necessary to forge them into an effective whole. More serious still, there is a nagging feeling that the boilers are being stoked hard enough, but that the machine is rushing headlong in the wrong direction.

To say so, of course, is regarded as all but treason by exponents of the nothing-suceeds-like-success line. Whether as a result of remunerative planned giving campaigns or the deserved though limited success of the Archbishop's recent trip; or the rise in ordinations last year, lifemanship is the order of the day. And the British public either acquiesces or positively enjoys a bit of religion if it goes with prosperity. So Church dignitories and officials can rarely resist the chance to bang the drum, even if the sound is hollow.

I think, however, we must, even at the risk of disturbing this euphoria, look at the causes of unease. First, a critical look at the administrative machine. I confine myself to the central church administration; there is no space to deal with the diocesan and parochial levels, except to say that the wave of innovations at the centre has left the local organisation far behind. As one Bishop has put it, "We had just managed to catch up with one set of Church House organisations, when another, more drastic, reshuffle is made. Now we are back where we began". This time-lag alone presents an administrative problem which has not been sufficiently studied.

The Church's systematic incursion into the field of administration properly so called is a fairly modern phenomenon; that much is certain. Until fairly recently there existed, apart from the machinery of the Church Commissioners, and comparable financial organisations at the diocesan level, little or no administrative machinery. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant observers from abroad, used as they are to the operations of substantial ecclesiastical civil services, used to shake their heads in wonder at the way in which a Bishop seemed to run a diocese with little full-time help other than his chaplain. This method of government from the episcopal study operated at Lambeth as elsewhere. And the Church Assembly, besides its financial organisation, boasted of no more than a tiny secretariat.

These were almost the only organs corresponding to the "statutory" side of the public service. Beyond that stretched the wide plains of Anglican "voluntary" societies—of which there were, and are, legion. Most of these date from the heyday of Victorian free enterprise—and they cover almost every charitable and mutual-benefit interest imaginable, from the (formerly) Waifs and Strays to the Church of England Building Society.

In the course of the last thirty years or so two things have happened. The developing trend towards joint action by the dioceses

led to the expansion of the Church Assembly's activities in such fields as the recruitment and training of clergy, and of church relations. At the same time bodies which originated as voluntary enterprises became more closely linked with the central administration, some because they needed money; others because they were found to be no longer marginal to the Church's interests. Bodies working in various fields of education and welfare are examples.

The present Archbishop saw clearly enough the need to bring some order into this increasingly complex and contradictory jungle. Committees sat to consider what should be done; the most important of them was the Ridley Committee on Central Funds. This committee produced a courageous report, and one which will be remembered when much else is forgotten. It did not fight shy of insisting on administrative coherence or regard this as inappropriate to ecclesiastical operations. But this was its downfall. The Assembly saw that if the Report were accepted, there would be no looking back. The old days would be gone for ever, and it would no longer be possible to get away with calling a spade a shovel. Thus the machinery of compromise and procrastination, on which the Church subsists was put into operation. The decision was that instead of reforming the central administration as a coherent whole, a start was to be made with a half. Instead of four Boards for the Ministry, Social Responsibility, Church Relations and Education, only two were set up. Of these Education was in existence in all but name and Social Responsibility, well, the Assembly should have a body of this sort, even if no two people could agree on what it was to do.

The fate of the Ridley Report is characteristic of the Church's view of efficient administration. By and large, church people hate it. Profound arguments from pastoral theology are deployed to show *both* that in the Church—the family of God—these props are unnecessary, *and* that their use prevents the free and personal operation of the Holy Spirit. Even where they are honestly held, these opinions are of course thoroughly unsound. Alas, one all too often finds them used less from conviction than as a convenient emotional red herring which can be relied upon to shift the argument from fact to feeling in no time.

I don't think it is necessary, in this journal, to spend time on an extensive theological justification of efficiency in administration. A more general theological point must be made, though, concerning the autonomy of secular disciplines. If God is Lord of all Life,

then secular disciplines, be they engineering, linguistics or administration, are part of the divine scheme of things, and entire in themselves. This means that Christians cannot, and should not try to, meddle with them to make them *more* Christian. Nor should Christians nibble: we will take this part of the discipline (which is Christian) and leave out another art (which perhaps looks less Christian). The responsible Christian approach is to submit to the discipline, and to learn and use it as effectively as possible. Therein, to borrow from Sir Francis Drake lies the true glory.

Now it is my view that the Church has not observed this rule in regard to administration. It has nibbled here and tinkered there, but has not been prepared to recognise that administration, as a discipline for ordering the common life of large agglomerations of people, is autonomous and indivisible. In two ways in particular has this proved fatal.

Responsibility and authority are essential to sound administration. So also is the fact that responsibility must be related to authority in such a way that whoever is responsible for a given piece of work is endowed with the authority needed to do it. These principles are consistently flouted in the Church. A man is given a responsibility which may require the making of necessary but unpopular decisions. Everyone knows that these cannot be implemented unless authority is exercised. But because it is thought that those affected should give way from Christian charity, the man with the responsibility is not equipped with commensurate authority. Then, charity fails just because, in the absence of authority, responsibility is not recognised, and the result is chaos.

Again, objectivity is essential to sound administration. Whether I like my boss or not, whether I agree with him or not, if he says "go", it is *my* duty to go (subject to quite proper, but very rare objections on grounds of conscience!). Naturally it helps if I like my boss; if I agree with him; and if instead of commanding, he suggests that it might be a good thing, if I thought it wise myself, and it were otherwise convenient, to go. But the absence of any of these emollients does not detract one jot from the objective fact of the relationship in which we stand. Nor incidentally does it make this relationship less personal in the true sense: indeed quite the contrary. My boss would be failing in *his* duty towards me, if he did not issue instructions. Without these I could not do my work, let alone do it well. One would have thought that the hierarchical

structure of the Church (not to mention its view of objective truth) would cause this concept to be fully understood and acted upon. Quite the contrary. Subjective reaction is so strong that the truth or objective goodness of a proposal stand little chance if they come up against one of these subjective vested interests.

Ergo: if administration is necessary to the Church's life, let it be efficient, thorough-going and professional: ad majorem dei gloriam.

What about the second reason for disquiet: the end to which the machine is directed? Some people think this is merely a matter of Anglican vagueness about basic principles (other than the principle of vagueness itself). Others believe that, far from vague, the end to which the machine is geared is all too clear. This is the restoration of a national institution which decently subscribes (*pace* Logan Pearsall Smith) to an Anglican First Cause, but finds its main justification as the moral prop of an affluent, property-owning democracy. They believe that, in the anxiety to be relevant to the present day the Church is succumbing to all the laodicean temptations. Indeed, they cannot help wondering how far the expansion of the central Church machine is not more of a chromium plated facade than a clearing of the decks for action.

Consider the bodies and cause which attract the lion's share of financial attention. Most of them are good value as publicity and public relations. Great play has been made with the enlargement and titivation of the Church's image in the press in recent times. In the Church Assembly recently the column-inches of Church news in the dailies was quoted as having doubled. What was more, there were fewer column-inches of adverse publicity! And whereas, until recently, the Archbishop had all but to get out of bed himself to answer nocturnal phone calls from the press (a task which he did *not* regard as an opportunity for evangelism), there now is a Public Relations Officer, a Press Officer, Publications and Radio and TV Departments; and we are about to have a refurbished Enquiry Centre. All excellent, *but* what is their job: to put out a fair, though painted, face? to defend the indefensible? to make a mountain of a mole hill? Or to speak the truth in season and out of season? to tell of weakness as of strength? and to err on the side of modesty rather than of bravado? All may be well, but unless at a time when the prostitution of truth not by falsehood but by half-truth is rampant, and public relations is often 90 per cent of the battle, the

Church in its public relations stands for the whole truth, it will be guilty of the ultimate treason.

Again, in spite of the much vaunted improvements in clergy stipends, the effective use of manpower in the Church is still impeded by inadequate pay. It would be interesting to know how many, allegedly full-time, clergy in fact earn part of their living by other means. While bachelors or men without families can just about survive, parsons with families cannot get on with their jobs for worry about how next month's bills will be paid. By one means or another clergy *must* be properly paid if the pay they do get is not to be largely wasted. Family allowances are the obvious answer, both in view of the limited resources available, and for the sake of justice.

We are told the money is not there. And yet when the Assembly is asked to vote a million pounds here and a million there for the creation or maintenance of eye-catching plant in the educational field, they do so without a murmur. When money is wanted for public relations they cannot ask for enough; when money is spent on parsonage houses and bishops' mansions, the painstaking cost planning and analysis used in some public building operations are "unnecessary". Even in the field of ordination training this confusion persists. What is the use of spending money on bigger and better training establishments for men whom one is not going to enable to do the job for which they are trained?

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". Where is the Church's treasure in the middle of all this spending? I don't suppose anyone knows, if only because all of us try to have our cake and eat it. *But*, it is the job of Church people to try to see their corporate life in the round and take responsibility for it. The fact that at present they have *very* little authority with which to underwrite that responsibility can only be noted.

The fact is that the misdirection of effort, the gong for the main chance and all the lifemanship which so endangers the soul of the Church is due to lack of the right objectives, and to sheer habit, as much as to the wilful misappropriation of time, energy and money. It may well be that we have no other conception of the will of God for His Church today. That we are so used to pursuing the ends I have referred to ourselves for most of the time and to seeing these pursued with alacrity and success by others, that we ourselves can conceive of nothing better for the Church.

If so, then it is a new understanding of the Church's task that is

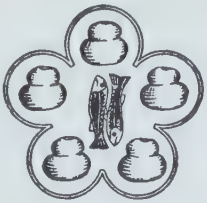
needed. A view of the Church, as the people of God, and the people of God on the move; at once footloose and detached and also profoundly engaged in the creation which God has made and towards the culmination of whose history God is working.

If this is what the Church is for, then we must so arrange our affairs that men see the Church for what it is. This means first and foremost to forswear window dressing and a return to functionalism. Let that which is appropriate to the proper functioning of the Church be done. And let a proper astringency be applied to all else. Let us decide what it is that requires to be done by the Church centrally, and then will the manpower, authority and resources necessary to do it. Let all the rest be devolved on the local church and give it autonomy to set to work. Let us develop the objectivity necessary to give orders, expecting them to be obeyed; and to take orders from people we may not have been used to obeying. Let vested interests, in the terms of the Ridley report "be surrendered".

No doubt many will fall by the way—and we may be among them. But only in this way will the Church regain its freedom from the dictates of convention and the shackles of indifferentism, to the truth with which God has made it free.

No man who says I'm as good as you *believes it. He would not say it if he did. The St. Bernard never says it to the toy dog, nor the scholar to the dunce, nor the employable to the bum, nor the pretty woman to the plain. The claim to equality, outside the strictly political field, is made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior. What it expresses is precisely the itching, smarting, writhing awareness of an inferiority which the patient refuses to accept.*

From "The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast", by C. S. Lewis (*Geoffrey Bles*, 12/6).



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on the meaning of
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The Temptation of Good Works

Valerie Pitt

The Reformation was a kind of religious champagne. Vintage justification, Mr. Luther's good wine, went to the European head, and, like other forms of drunkenness, this exaltation had consequences: brawling, bloody noses, and the morning after the night before. Christendom woke with a hang-over to the spinsterish, disgusted voice of M. Voltaire nagging away about *L'Infame*. It was then that the Establishment discovered what, after all the theological excitement, Christianity was really for. Revelation, by assuring us of the rewards and punishments of the after life, guarantees the moral and social code. Religion in fact provides the sanction for good behaviour. Or so Paley said. Burke, who was more sophisticated, said it was a political necessity. The governing classes are restrained by the fear of the Lord, and the splendours of religious ceremony mitigate the discontents of the man "in humble life" by putting him in mind of a "state where the privileges of opulence shall cease". The function of faith, in short, is to maintain the *status quo*. God, the "Almighty Mechanic" of the physical universe, is also the regulator of a social and moral clockwork, as Arnold defined it half a century later "The Eternal, not ourselves, who makes for Righteousness".

This is still a common Anglican view, and it is, paradoxically, one reason why we are not now (though no one has told *The Times*) a Christian nation. The association of the Church with a social system not only unjust but manifestly inefficient did, in a grimmer sense, put men in mind of a state when the privileges of opulence should cease. Erastianism destroys social witness. It also has a melancholy effect on personal religion. For in these terms the practice of faith is the regular performance of socially useful acts for the sake of a celestial reward. Mrs. Humphrey Ward describes in one of her novels the effect of a pious young gentleman's efforts in a working class district. Before: slatternly women, in debt to the tally man for unsuitable finery, neglected homes, brawling, pub-keeping husbands. After: neat houses, sober suited matrons, and Bible-

reading workmen. Faith has delivered them all from the demon drink and the H.P. system, and set their feet in the well known gospel paths of tidiness and household economy. The Eternal not ourselves made for respectability as well as righteousness.

The Evangelical revival gave this thinking its most ironic twist. The rapture of the new life carried the first generation of Evangelicals to the relief not only of spiritual but of mental and physical need. They created a tradition of compassion, and after them the *serious* man expected, no matter what his theology, to be busy with Missions and Sunday Schools and Coal Clubs. But all Christians are not, unfortunately, Wilberforces or Shaftesburys, and there was a difficulty: the problem of finding a good work to do. Herbert may sing of the holiness of sweeping rooms, but the average man finds this kind of activity conspicuously spiritual only when it is done in Church, or in hospitals, and then is unpaid. A *good work* is an action, like teaching the orphan girl to sew, distinct from everyday life, and there is not always one to hand. Hence the multiplication of charitable committees, the burdensome bazaars, the unnecessary needlework, in which the faithful persuaded, and still persuade themselves, that they are going good. The business became an industry in which the poor and the heathen were the raw material of spiritual progress. Mrs. Pardiggle, Mrs. Proudie, Mr. Brocklehurst show what Christianity looks like when practised as a programme of conscious and strenuous moral action. Their originals were less funny and more dangerous.

But the habit of mind remains. The Englishman thinks of religion as "doing good", the committed Christian as a special kind of business called "church work", the modern-minded Anglican as "getting things done". The itch for action which sent our ancestors to found temperance societies in Borrioboola Gha sends us to wave banners in Trafalgar Square, to shove leaflets through letter boxes, and get under the feet of shop stewards. Good works are still distinct from the everyday vocation. The clergy sit on Borough Councils, or work part-time in the grocers, while the laity, happily being-the-Church, mill round the altar. But there is one significant change. The traditional works of mercy have become, quite rightly, the responsibility of the Community. There is still a need for voluntary service, but since much welfare work has passed from the amateur philanthropist to the trained professional, a good deal of Christian energy is released on the Church itself. Every clergyman

under forty either has a scheme for upsetting his parish with experiments, or has already written a book about it. Every Bishop is on a Committee for turning Something Upside Down, and so are half the laity. We have revised the Canon Law, done over the Catechism, reinvested our Capital, and are having a lovely time.

The winds of the Spirit we tell each other are quickening the Church's life. This is very reassuring, for the Spirit guarantees Itself. *We* shan't make our grandfather's mistakes. Or shall we? The sin of our well-meaning ancestors was not crude. Their obsession with sound morals and good works made them insensitive to the claims of human beings as persons. They offended against human dignity, and so against justice, but their root sin was that of which the Lord accused the Pharisees, the pride of the good man blinded by a conviction of his own righteousness. And we are certainly not safe from that. We have in hand projects, and experiments to advance the Kingdom. We are full of ideas. Wait, says Gamaliel, and see if these things be of God. Not likely. We don't need to wait. The literature has already gone out with a personal message from some Prelate or other, the newspaper articles are already written. In fact the Church of England is, just now, so ready to tell the world and itself that is on a good thing that an alarmist would suppose it in grave spiritual danger. Certainly its view of Christian success is very odd. For what matters, we think, is to impress the world, to make it take notice of us. And our conviction that we are right blinds us just as it blinded our ancestors, to other claims.

Take one instance. There is no obvious poverty in England at the present time. The claim which respect for human personality insistently makes on us is not one of physical degradation. It is rather an anaemia of the personality, a kind of psychological malnutrition. We are indeed aware of this, and some of our experiments, the house Church, the industrial mission, are attempts to deal with its symptoms, with impersonality, with rootlessness, the want of a community feeling in modern industrial society. But is is the mere humanists, the dons and sociologists, the teachers and the left-wing intellectuals who insist that the cause of this disease lies in the social structure itself. Just as they insisted that the causes of poverty lay in social inequality. One of the things we have not yet noticed about all our experiments is that where the charitable organisations of the nineteenth century accepted without question the structure of the society which made their services necessary, so

the active Christian now accepts the commercial philosophies which make our experiments necessary, and indeed attempts to emulate the methods of the commercial world. We are attempting "To Sell the Church" almost the packaged Church. Hence the often callous indifference of our brighter revolutionaries to the conscience of older Christians. "Must make the services bright and attractive and contemporary. Never mind Miss Forsythe . . . she's only worshipped here for thirty years." But this is precisely that unawareness of the value of the human person which our grandfathers displayed when they talked of the deserving poor. What is worse is the indifference the same experimenters often display to the value of personal discipline and devotion.

And this is where the real error lies. "My Father" said the Lord "worketh hitherto and I work." Or, as the philosphers say, God is Essence and Act; there is in Him no hesitation between *I am* and *I do.* The Lord we worship is no nihilistic, gnostic, unknown and uncreated, but the Lord, the giver of Life,

> See now the Heavenly Power
> Makes all things new.

The Christian, desiring to act the faith yields certainly to a psychological need, love desires to do something, but still more to the plain realities of his state. United in Baptism with the Divine Being he feels on his nature the stress of the Divine Act. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." But the Divine Work is not a scurry of endless doing. "At the still point" says the poet struggling with abstracts, "*There* the dance is." But no metaphor or analogy, not this one of the unending dance, nor the less common one of the hawk climbing the wind with unmoving wing, can fully express the equilibrium of Divine Power and Divine Stillness. The Christian knows it only by imitation, by moving in a constant rhythm of prayer and action. It is the isolation of action from prayer, the scramble after good works of our own choosing, instead of those which the Lord has prepared for us to walk in, which perverts our efforts. This is incidentally a subject on which poets are wiser than preachers. To them Christian action is not "meeting a challenge" or a species of athletics, it is "to stand and wait", "to do without, take tosses and obey" to pray, appropriately enough on Ash Wednesday,

> Teach us to care and not to care,
> Teach us to sit still.

Converting and Repenting

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

When we are being penitent, what is it we are being penitent about? To say simply "our" sins begs the question. To be more specific, and say our sins against God, our sins against other people, our sins against ourselves, does indeed take the matter a step further and help us learn a bit more of what we are like. But for members of the body of Christ it is questionable whether this ascetic exercise can comprise the whole of repentance. Not merely is there the confessor's necessary distinction between penitence and remorse, but there is a more general truth, reached for by the pious—and by totalitarian purges—when they try staging public confession. It is the acknowledgement on the part of the Church and all its members of the human weaknesses built into the ark of salvation. Such exhibitionism we may associate with Holy Rollers and early Buchmanites, but smearing foreheads with ashes, having National Days of Prayer and Penitence (but why only in wartime?) are attempts to enact this truth. So too perhaps is the service of Commination, which nowadays gets neglected under the false impression that it is just for ticking off the others with uncontemporary severity. So certainly is the Litany of the Book of Common Prayer, which could also do with being used more often and more intelligently. So indeed are the nowadays despised General Confessions in our orders of worship. They are despised as too easy substitutes for more stringent acts of penitence; but if their "we's" were contrasted with the "I's" of the two common creeds, it might be clearer to those who recite them Sunday by Sunday that they are admissions of common failings, failings of the Church, At the top of that list of failings must surely always come the Church's failure to be what it is there for, to be in its members a channel of God's power and converting love towards His children.

Thus when we confess, each one of us, that we have gossiped about Aunt Flo again, and got cross with that goggle-eyed typist, and all the rest of the boring list, and when we ask for God's grace to help us amend our lives as we purpose to do, all this should be done in the context of our ashamed recognition of our failure to serve as a vessel of God's converting power. What matters in our contrition is not that we haven't turned out the nice person we half-flattered

ourselves that this time we might be, not even particularly that God is hurt by our damnable offences, but that the Church's witness has suffered through our sins.

Parsons lay on the *Benedicite* in Lent, and explain it away as a song for the time of growth. It does however seem possible to incorporate it more fully and more positively into our understanding of Lent. With its chain of exhortations to bless God, culminating in the appeal to ye children of men, it is surely the most evangelical of all our canticles. That we sing it at a time when we are preoccupied with our own penitence links the two themes of converting and repenting. They were linked at the beginning of the gospels, and to the extent that we disconnect them, it is scarcely surprising if our evangelising is unblessed and if our attempts at self-examination and repentance seem often a self-conscious appendage to the main body of our faith.

If on the other hand we kick ourselves into remembering that religious aspiration—the need for God—isn't just a quirk recognised in themselves by only the devout minority, but is something that everyone wants somehow to express; and if we go on from there to reckon how far we share responsibility for the Church's muffled witness, then we may grow in grace (more than we desire, very often, or deserve) to foster our converting and repenting.

Talk of muffled witness goes today usually with diatribes against the Church's failure to communicate its message, and the remedies put forward talk of streamlined presentation. That is not what this article is about. Just the opposite; for at the popular level of religious chit-chat, "the problem of communication" gets fatally severed from the penitent living of the would-be communicators. At a profounder level, the two things—communicating and penitent living—are indissolubly fused. Repenting is for most of us most intense before communion, and our communicating together in the Lord's Supper is the apogee of communication. Here in paradigm is the solution to our problem. At the altar we kneel together penitent and believing, and to us is given the blest, broken body that was offered from our midst. So we as members of the broken body are given to the world, to be absorbed and assimilated by it. Just as the token of Christ's body and blood calls forth our penitence and our faith, so we get sent out as tokens for our fellow-sinners.

If this seems too pious a conclusion, it can be given bite by relating it to things as they are. My fear is that what passes for

penitence in too many Anglican churches is an artificially induced morbidity about shortcomings that may not really even be sins; and that it will, heaven help us, be hard to break out of this charmed circle of genteel introspection so long as we are content to ignore the very theological link between repenting and converting. Indeed, insofar as repenting for various sins has traditionally been a hallmark of Anglo-Catholic teaching, and converting unbelievers the characteristic concern of the Evangelicals, it may even be that before the Church of England can look to unity within itself (let alone anywhere else) there must be a readiness on both sides to learn more about the interrelated nature of these two religious activities.

"Hey, Anthony! Come and get a load of this guy's night life—!!"

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Letter from a Laywoman (2)

Dear Sir,

I feel strongly that the Church is not being administered according to Christ's concept. He taught us to say "Our" Father, but one cannot accept the Fatherhood of God and reject the brotherhood of man. "Our" Father's work, and the administration of "His" Church is therefore the business of the Laity as well as the Clergy, by Divine Right, and we should not be considered presumptuous when we question man-made laws within the Church.

Why is the welfare of the Vicar, rather than that of the parish as a whole considered? Vicars are human, subject to error as all humanity is subject, and the ability to carry power is not given to all of us. The Church helps other young people when they take the wrong turning, but seems to have made no provision to help Her own, such as a firm guiding hand *with* power behind it, if needed, not even when they break God's Commandments, which I consider more important than Canon Law.

I know a young Vicar who is not on speaking terms with half his parish, and many who come to the Lord's Table are in the same state, one with another, because of him. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the focal point of his ministry, yet he totally ignores the basic command of reconciliation, while both the Bible, and the C. of E. manual, the Book of Common Prayer, stress this need and the danger of disobedience. Contrition, he says, is a matter of saying you are sorry in general confession, *not* necessarily feeling sorry.* It is of course much easier than facing a neighbour whom one has offended, but is it reconciliation? What is the use of telling an All Seeing, All Knowing, God that we are sorry, with our tongue in our cheek, having no "intention" of relinquishing the very sin we ask to be pardoned?

This I feel is a dangerous policy, because if I understand the Scriptures correctly, Christianity must be accepted in its entirety; one cannot therefore pick out the bits that are agreeable and discard the rest. It could also destroy faith in God's Word. If one vital command can be ignored with impunity, it gives rise to doubt regarding others, and doubt is a caress of the devil. St. Paul says, "Let us hold fast our faith without wavering". Vicars also promise

* cf. the second paragraph of "Repentance".

at their ordination *to try* to be "wholesome and godly examples and patterns for the people to follow", and are exhorted to remember "And if it shall happen the same Church, or any member thereof, to take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of fault" etc.

I pity any young Vicar who gets "mixed up", or falls into the sin of Simony, but should he be allowed to continue without correction, and perhaps mislead others? This, at least, is one question the Laity should be entitled to ask without being considered presumptuous; it concerns their spiritual welfare, which in its turn whould concern the Church as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

A LAYWOMAN.

Our Contributors

Nicholas Mosley **is an ex-editor of** PRISM **and has just finished a biography of Father Raines.**

Eberhard Weddell **is ex-Secretary of the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church Assembly.**

Valerie Pitt **is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Woolwich Polytechnic.**

Christopher Martin **is an ex-Editor and founder of** PRISM.

James Portman **is a young Canadian journalist.**

Peter Hammond **is Secretary of the New Churches Research Group.**

Stephan Hopkinson **is Director General of the Industrial Christian Fellowship and Editor of the "London Churchman".**

George Brassington **is a priest in Manchester.**

Comment

Editorial Repentance

This is our Repentance number and I wish to open by making a definite apology for our December "Focus". I will now leave further comment aside and tell the story of the election or non-election of the lady to the House of Laity as I now believe it to have happened, having checked all the sources. (Which is the thing I should have done before.)

A lady who is not a member of the Diocesan Conference was urged to stand as a representative of the Diocese of London of the House of Laity. She wrote in for a proposal form, implying that she had read the arrangements for the election in the *London Churchman*. She got a proposal form back with no details of the closing date for submitting it; she could have read this in the *London Churchman* and of course, in the way that these elections are run, it was the proposer's and seconder's responsibility to see that the proposal form was in and that she knew all about it. At the vital time of the signing of the proposal form she was away from home on a holiday. Diocesan Office made a very great effort to get hold of her to see that her proposal form got in in time but she was unobtainable and when she came back it was too late—the date for the closing of nominations had passed. She went to see a clergyman who was one of those responsible for the organisation of the diocese—a man who has done enormous work towards the reorganisation of the Church in this diocese. He told her that nothing had gone wrong with the election according to form; that possibly the proposal form should have had the date of submission on it but that there was no legal need for this. It is possible that he was provoked to being a little bit tactless in his reception of her, but there is no doubt that he had gone to great trouble in the organisation of this election to see that he, as a cleric, did not interfere in the affairs of the lay election. It was extraordinarily hard luck on the lady concerned who felt that she was being put upon by a conspiracy of an inner ring in the diocese, a feeling that a great many people have about the Church at various levels. On the other hand the authorities were not to blame in any way. It is one of those regrettable cases out of which everyone comes out badly though no one should. The only person

who really should come out badly is your Editor who did not check his sources before writing this story. As a postcript he would like to add that arrangements have been made in the diocese to put the date by which proposal forms should be in on proposal forms in future. This is not essential according to the law, but it is the kind of safeguard which cannot be too often urged on those who conduct these elections.

R.D. writes:

I was sitting at my desk minding the firm's business, when the telephone rang. It was a gentleman from the *Daily Sketch*. He had been speaking, he told me, to the Church Information Office about disestablishment, as he wished to work up a new story about the designated Archbishop of Canterbury and his supposed desire to disestablish the Church. They had referred him to me because they said I was an Angry Young Man who desired disestablishment. "But", I said, "I am neither angry nor young." He was discouraged. "But I am passionately in favour of disestablishment." He brightened. "Could I have a statement", he said. "Are you the spokesman of any group working for disestablishment?"

I could see the way his mind was working. He imagined I might be a sort of ecclesiastical General Delgado giving surreptitious press conferences in outer Lewisham and making mysterious telephone calls to the Upper Amazon; hijacking diocesan bishops and shanghai-ing Mothers Union members and towing coachloads of them into Faith House, that well known pirate hide-out in the heart of Establishmentaria. He had confused, and so perhaps had the Church Information Office, disestablishment, mainly an ecclesiastical matter, with anti-Establishment, a matter of attitudes, anger, privilege and passion.

I said I was the spokesman for no one but myself and I unfortunately knew of no secret society of the sort he envisaged. "I wish I did."

"No one who could give me a statement?" he asked wistfully. "I am most terribly sorry", I said, "but no one." We rang off, mutually discouraged.

C.M. writes:

Anglican Students Conference

South-east of the silent cathedral which tithes of the Irvingites built
Where in their gleaming neolith metropolitan students debate

Saw a New Year's notice announcing in letter of blue and gilt
"Federation of Anglican Students" is holding its annual fete.
Four corners of England had sent them, a badge in two hundred
lapels,
Resplendent in various blazers, or snug in a polo-neck
To confer with their fellow enthusiasts, summoned by similar bells—
From Rowley Regis and Tipton, from Truro and Tooting Bec.
They discoursed on all possible questions that come under Christian
surmise,
They heard today's Anglican experts, saying just what is up with the
Church;
But the onlooker could not help wondering as he studied their
eager eyes,
What the displaced union inmates made of their hearty search.

* * *

R.D. writes:

Ever since I helped inspect a theological college and sat in on a sermon preparation class, I have been amazed at my own inadequate training as a preacher. Before one of the students was to preach at a local church, he worked on his sermon for a week, went through the outline with a tutor, and delivered the sermon in full at the college before letting-fire on the congregation. The results are very good, and no doubt the foundation is well laid for lifelong regular sermon preparation. But as a Reader, other than passing exams in Bible (O.T. paper very weak), Prayer Book and Doctrine, I have had no instruction in doing the one job which distinguishes a Reader from any layman and that is preaching.

After a year of fortnightly Evensongs I find that only one clergyman has ever heard a sermon of mine, and he is well-known to be extremely polite. The congregations I talk to average about a dozen: they like, so they say, my Anglican voice (we are in a Low Church area) and the shortness of my sermons. But I worry sometimes at the heresies that they must be uncomplainingly enduring, and at the licence one has (if one so wishes) to say *absolutely anything at all* with episcopal approval. Most Readers are actually far more orthodox than the clergy are: but there must be lunatic fringers, I may be one of the lunatics. . . .

Actually the sermon, unless it is superlatively good, which in minute country parishes it can hardly be expected to be, is not the most important part of Evensong. I would say the key moment is immediately after the hymn following the Third Collect; if one's intercessions are short and combine reasonable relevance with traditional rather than contemporary forms of address to the deity, then this is perhaps the one moment in the week when most of the congregation are truly lifted out of themselves and offer to God their fleeting images of what other people's lives may be.

Second in importance comes the sermon, not, generally for the opportunity it gives to instruct or edify, but because it supplies ten minutes' pause in a weekly round of feeding, working, talking and sleeping: a pause in which, aided or hindered by the preacher's thoughts, reflection can creep timidly and momentarily back into its place amongst our mental processes. Also the sermon can occasionally fulfil an educative function, in encouraging congregations to think in a preliminary way, not only about Christian doctrine and Biblical teaching, but about the rights and wrongs of the issues we all come across in the papers and on TV—juvenile delinquency, capital punishment, etc. Here the "liveness" of the preacher and his (assumed) wider knowledge than his congregation, enable him to set people thinking for themselves about matters which do effect them, but on which generally they receive their opinions ready-made through the press. Again the opportunity to think and talk for a moment about something outside their personal preoccupation is far more valuable than it appears superficially, if you remember how self-absorbed are most of the people who live and die in little cottages in little villages in the dying countryside.

A Correspondent writes:

Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word . . . that . . . he may receive the benefit of absolution.

Clerks in Holy Orders will, the Establishment expects, hear Confessions and absolve sinners. And indeed most schools of Anglican thinking now recognise the value, if only the psychological value, of confession to a priest, and no longer regard it as Popish wickedness.

But popery and priestcraft are still the nightmare of English protestantism. Amiable clergymen, once in a confessional, are

suspect; potential Machiavellians, manipulators of the free English conscience; and their penitents must be poor fish anyway, not to be able to manage their sins in sober independence. We allow the practice of confession, but with reserve. It is "a medicine not a food". That is an understatement. It is a major operation with the sorrowing relatives, and even the surgeon, undecided between grapes and a wreath. There is a tacit Anglican agreement to discourage the practice, especially as a regular discipline, by making even the mechanics of the business difficult, embarrassing and uncomfortable.

Let him come to me. First, that is, catch your hare. Ideally the Confessor should be the parish priest. But the average cleric does not arrange to hear confessions, the initiative belongs to the sinner.

"Father, will you hear my confession?"

Clergyman turns white and says "Er". Recovered, he eyes the penitent with speculative sympathy, and adopts a pastoral tone. For the principle of *emergencies only* convinces him that this odd desire for his ministry is provoked by exceptional guilt, and if he does not suspect the worst, the congregation will. The tough penitent may, by persistence, educate both priest and people, but he must reckon with an initial handicap. Since we do not train our clerics in this part of their job, many of them do not know how to set about it.

There are, of course, many clergymen who are not unfamiliar with the practice. But here again the coyness of the Church is a hindrance. Mowbrays, I think, used to publish a list of churches where a man could make his confession Saturday night and go to a sung Eucharist on Sunday morning. This association is no longer inevitable. Corporate Worship is the thing just now, and certainly more popular than personal discipline. A priest may establish his flock very happily with a "Family Eucharist" and not dare to wake their sleeping prejudices by talking about Confession. This makes for some weird notices. *The Vicar can hear Confessions* is at any rate clear. But *The Vicar will be in Church? The Vicar will be available for Churchings and to give spiritual counsel?* The wary penitent will avoid this vicar. He is in church, but so is Mrs. Jones with a baptism form, and the verger with trouble about the boiler. When the fainting sinner at last plucks the clerical sleeve, the man is willing, but surprised, and inclined to suspect a scrupulous conscience. But supposing the notices say boldly *Confessions 6 p.m.*, we still do not expose ourselves to the strictures of the Protestant Truth

Society. Except in imitation Roman Establishments, which go in for a music hall box office, there isn't a sign of a confessional. The penitent learns to look, in agressively Anglican churches and Cathedrals (York, Chester, Chichester, Wells, Salisbury, but not, as far as I can discover, Canterbury: I have no information about Southwark:) for a surplice draped on a chair. A sinner acquires extensive experience in reconnaissance work.

The last hazard is the minister who must (*pace* the Crown Lawyers) be discreet, but too often, is not learned. Theoretically, all the penitent needs is the priest's "I absolve thee": in practice the ministry is no less pastoral than sacerdotal, and his clumsiness may inhibit, though it cannot prevent, the operation of grace. And our clergy can be very ham-handed. This is not an exclusively Anglican fault. St. Theresa endured much from her Confessors (their sufferings are not recorded); modern Romans suggest that she would not find the situation very much changed. But the "medicine" theory places our priests under certain disadvantages. There is no tradition of training, and some of them are not altogether sure what the business is about. The Prayer Book says "by the Ministry of God's Holy Word" and lays a good deal of emphasis on counsel. There is their clue: hearing confessions then is an obvious extension of the ministry of preaching. And so Confessors talk on suitable subjects, there is a lecture on the seven deadly sins, with text book remedies, a discourse on aridity, a set piece on loving God. Little of it speaks to the penitent's actual condition. The clergy try hard enough. Some priests turn the actual confession into a dialogue or discussion of the penitents culpability, some have no obvious qualms about giving lengthy and detailed advice to complete strangers. And it is here that lack of training and tradition reveals itself. Most priests pick up their moral theology on the side, usually from Roman books, for there are very few Anglican moral theologians (except the late Dr. Kirk and Dr. Mortimer) or if modern minded, from a sprinkling of psychologists. Because of the unsystematic nature of their study, and the fact that we have no really vigorous writing and thinking about ascetic and moral theology, few of them are particularly skilled in applying principles to particular cases, and, what is especially hard on the penitent, few of them agree either about what acts are sins, or the degree of moral responsibility involved in them.

This evil is aggravated by another. Even experienced confessors cannot always get out of the habit of seeing the business as exceptional

They will be portentous. True, some neo-spikes, the kind that celebrate Holy Communion to a stop watch, adopt a frosty, staccato manner, but many priests invest Confession with an atmosphere of drama and heavy religious emotion. This is both psychologically and spiritually dangerous. Contrition is an emotion, and it can be painfully disturbing, but at least one object of the discipline is to quiet the penitent and direct his emotion to the practice of the faith. That is what the ritual is for; like metrical pattern in poetry it is a controlling device. The breezy Catholic who chucks a stole over his tennis shirt and the man who adds trimmings, the extempore prayer, or the theatrical standing absolution, is not in fact, very helpful. And if it is true, as I hope it is not, that certain priests will, in the middle of holy conversation, require a man to flop down and make his confession then and there, the sooner they stop the better. For here the whole thing, instead of being a matter of bread and butter discipline involving the mind and the will, turns on a crisis of personal emotion. Some clerics do fall into this error, without necessarily indulging in flamboyant actions, and any penitent with sense will avoid priests with a reputation for magnetic charm, and, like sin itself, the Confessor who uses his ministry to recount or release his own emotional tensions. Psychologically speaking the aim is impersonality, spiritually, the turning the penitent's mind from the emotion of sinfulness (which some people enjoy) to the practical correction of sinful habits.

This is really the point at which the ineptitude of our clergy becomes dangerous. The average sinner can do quite well on the present system with a little humour and humility. The rule is simple, don't shoot the pianist he's doing his best, and if he keeps you kneeling for longer than fifteen minutes . . . faint. But no sinner is average all the time, and sin is complicated. So is reform. What we really need is a consultant service for difficult cases. And we would like to suggest certain clergymen who might be on such a panel. It must be remembered that our information is limited, exclusion does not imply condemnation nor inclusion personal sample.

The Dean of Westminster, the Bishop of Lewes, the Bishop of Stepney, the Abbot of Nashdom, the Chancellor of York Minster (Canon Cant), the Archdeacon of Llandaff (Gwynno James), the Vicar of St. Margaret's, Liverpool (Bernard Markham), the Vicar of St. Mary Magdalene, Oxford, the Vicar of St. George's, Bickley,

Fr. Thornton, Fr. Stephen Langton, the Rev. Colin Stephenson, the Rev. F. P. Coleman, Canon Bentley, the Chaplain of University College, Oxford, Canon Leonard, Canon Hood. All these, and no doubt others could be suggested, have the reputation of "knowing their stuff". Now we have a great many boards and committees on this and that. Perhaps the time has come to seek expert advice on training the average clergyman in what is no unimportant part of his ministry.

N.M. writes:

The Letters from a Laywoman in this and last month's PRISM describe a situation which is probably familiar in many parishes—that of a vicar not being on speaking terms with half his congregation, and vice versa. And Laywoman is probably right to be seriously upset by this: the forces which paralyse a parish and stop its proper functioning are much more of this personal kind, than failures in technique or salesmanship.

Yet Laywoman seems to think that the answer is all too easy—just a matter of making the effort for everyone to be friendly again. But surely this is too naïve a view of the problem and even of the importance of it. Just because the situation is (miserably) so common, and because it is so uniquely destructive, it would seem to be a problem at the heart of human relationships and one very difficult to deal with.

We have got so much into the habit of thinking of "sin" as something sexual or to do with delinquency that we forget that in any Christian definition it is something we are involved with violently all the time, the so-called pious and respectable just as much as (and perhaps even more than) the chaotic and impious. Because churchgoers are not as a rule tempted to steal the poor-box or rip up the hassocks they tend to think they have by-passed sin (there still seem to be clergymen left who say that they would "make their confessions" if they had "done anything wrong"). But of course all this is nonsense. Pride is a worse sin than adultery; a churchman deliberately cutting his neighbour is doing more wickedness (probably) than thugs fighting with knives. All this, again, emphasises the seriousness of the sins that Laywoman writes about; but it also emphasises the strength of such evil and our vulnerability to it, and thus emphasises also the compassion and understanding required to deal with it.

We should not be particularly *surprised* when we find half a parish not on speaking terms with the other half. We say every Sunday that we "most grievously have committed" "manifold sins and wickedness"—and what on earth do we mean if not something like what Laywoman writes about? It is these sorts of sin—the failures of human relationships—that we are involved in fiercely all the time. And the point is that unless we recognise this—recognise the power and the ubiquitousness of evil as well as its miserable consequences—then we cannot fight against it. Or rather, we will try to fight it with the cheery weapons of moral re-armament ("just one big pull, boys, and we're over the hill") rather than by the only means that are effective but which also are more demanding—a turning to God.

In short, when one finds oneself in a parish in which one half is not on speaking terms with the other half, the only profitable reaction (other than thinking it is fearfully bad luck, perhaps) is to go out oneself and try to make the situation better. Or if one can't, then just to bear it. In either event life will be normal: persons will be sinning, failing, fighting, occasionally succeeding—all in the natural surroundings of their own salvation and that of the world.

WHY WERE THE SAINTS SAINTS?

Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful, and patient when it was difficult to be patient; and because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still, and kept silent when they wanted to talk, and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable.

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Poetry

THE PHARISEES

Do not touch me. I am saved
anchored from life's bitter ways
I sit among the raging waters
watching weak men that the current sways
I, alone am safe and saved
sin cannot break me
Love cannot take me
the Bible upholds me
my sureness enfolds me
I shall be saved.

Up, down, across and bow,
Christ, the Lord, hath saved us now
Dominus nosiscum.

Sing to martyrs, chant to saints
and give some space to Mary
in matters of religion
one cannot be too wary
in being Protestant
let us not protest too much.

Let's take our God
and fence Him in
upon the altar high
or better still
lock Him safe
between the Bible leaves
that is such a handy size
we don't want Him any bigger
think how awkward it would be
should He enlarge and rule our lives
omnipotent,
Almighty.

JOAN HEWSON.

THE ATTAINED AND BECOMING

We have discerned Thy presence whilst straining towards the future.
And in looking back towards the past,
Have seen the promise of the past fulfilled.
And in the humility of discovered error,
The knowledge, so eagerly proclaimed, discarded.
And stand poised between two worlds, the attained and becoming.

The Church is poised in the act of becoming.
Inspired by knowledge of the past and belief in the future.
With wings that spread and sweep, covering us over.
As each part grows towards the whole, and the whole towards the part
And the Spirit bloweth where it listeth,
Onward, with great wings of projection.

Our hearts grow outward—we look forward and backward.
Our joy and sorrow, and the sense of mortality surround us.
We are lost in wonder of the world around and above us.
The myth and imagination hover to uplift us.
Poised between two worlds, the attained and becoming:

We do not know where we shall be, or the company we shall keep.
We see and feel corruption, and our fears surround us.
We are incomplete in ourselves, with much seeking and so small attainment.
We soar outward to the unknown and strange world—
Lonely and immense—the future the past and the present.
Awaiting the consummation of our understanding,
Between two worlds, the attained and becoming.

R. E. KISBY.

Reviews

The Plays of Robert Bolt

Robert Bolt's emergence as a dramatist comes as a breath of fresh air, or if you prefer, a dash of cold water. For theatre-goers numbed by the protracted, self-pitying snarls of John Osborne and Christopher Logue and the sordid, low-vaudeville produce of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, Mr. Bolt's advent is a jolt back to reality. For one thing, he knows how to write plays. He has served his apprenticeship in the exacting medium of radio drama, and the fulfilment of this stewardship may be found in his latest work for the stage.

Mr. Bolt currently holds court at two Shaftesbury Avenue theatres. The Queen's offers us "The Tiger and the Horse", a denunciation of spiritual isolationism. A block away at the Globe, we have "A Man For All Seasons", an absorbing dissection of Sir Thomas More.

Both these plays, in common with Mr. Bolt's first major work, "Flowering Cherry", show a concern with the many-faceted problem of Responsibility. "Flowering Cherry" was the tragedy of a middle-aged man's failure to grow up and come to terms with Life. "Tiger and the Horse" is a topical debate on personal and public commitment, worked out against a university backdrop. "A Man For All Seasons" is a grey, shadowy, but nonetheless crystal-clear analysis of the conflict between responsibility to one's conscience and responsibility to one's friends, family and nation.

It is with "A Man For All Seasons" that I wish to linger. Its great strength lies in the fact that it is thought-provoking without being perplexing. Mr. Bolt does not talk riddles. He does not smudge his dramatic tapestry with obscure symbolism or wispy pontificating. He has achieved a masterful distillation of a period when, in Mr. Bolt's own words, "England was negotiating the sharpest corner of her spiritual history".

Considered superficially, "A Man For All Seasons" emerges as an extremely tantalising exercise in suspense—a battle of wits between More and the enemies who wished to destroy him. Throughout the events leading to Henry VIII's divorce and the break with Rome, and even afterwards, More kept silence. "My silence is my

safety under the law", he declares early in the play, and he employed every legal technique gleaned from an encyclopaedic knowledge of English law to keep the wolves from his throat. His views on the schism were kept even from his immediate family. "Alice", he tells his wife in an effort to reassure her, "this is not the stuff of which martyrs are made."

More walked a precarious tightrope. It took only the Oath of Supremacy to tumble him into the pit. His refusal to take the Oath, coupled with the bringing against him of perjured evidence, impaled him for good. However, he remained silent as long as he remained uncondemned; then he spoke his mind and his words have echoed through the ages.

Mr. Bolt's analogies with the twentieth century are clear: McCarthyism, modern utilitarianism and mass conformity, the failure of America's Fifth Amendment to preserve individual rights—all serve as shackles to the individual conscience, all serve in smothering free will. More makes it clear that he "is more bounden to be loyal to his conscience than to any other thing". The wide diversion between More's position and the compromising double standards of his contemporaries is voiced by Norfolk when he gruffly tells Sir Thomas: "Your conscience is your own affair—but you're a statesman!"

This brings us to the kernel of the play. Kenneth Tynan, who ought to know better, has suggested that More refused to give in to the King because he feared for his soul. This is merely another way of saying that More's primary quality was self-interest. It would be fairer to say that More loved his Church. It was a love that transcended his devotion to his English sovereign. It was a love that cost him his job, his money, the understanding of his family and friends —and finally, his life.

More's endearing saintliness is subtly underlined by Paul Scofield's muted, wraith-like portrayal of him. It is a quietly convincing performance which brings out the man's essential goodness. Mr. Scofield is admirably complemented by Leo McKern, who appears as The Common Man—an admittedly vulgar chorus figure who periodically provides illuminating commentaries on the action and bumbles about in a variety of guises—as More's steward, as his boatman, and finally as his executioner.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Bolt still displays a weakness for rather trite melodrama. This is not too apparent in the More play

because he is working with accepted historical facts. It is all too discernible in "The Tiger and the Horse". I wish I could be kinder to this play, for I like it considerably and sympathised with the "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" theme. If only Mr. Bolt had been less banal and more eloquent. The plot is the major stumbling block. Jack Dean is a university master in his mid-sixties who maintains an emotional detachment not only from events in the outside world but from his immediate family as well. His personal policy of non-commitment totters when (*a*) his daughter becomes pregnant by a left-wing research fellow, and (*b*) his wife's broodings on the horrors of nuclear warfare lead her to madness and cause her to slash a valuable college painting and attach an anti-Bomb petition to it.

Now, I have several objections to this play. Much of it is sheer cackling melodrama which cannot even be salvaged by the work of such resourceful performers as Michael and Vanessa Redgrave and Catherine Lacey. The Master, on whose personality the action of the play pivots, is an unfinished character—Mr. Bolt does not tell us why he is as he is. Moreover, after getting his characters into an impossible mess, Mr. Bolt has the irritating habit of tidying things up by throwing in one violent, reconciling incident at the tail end of the play. In "Flowering Cherry," Sir Ralph Richardson dropped dead after attempting to bend an iron bar in order to prove his manhood. The third act of "Tiger and the Horse" has everybody floundering in an artificially-contrived morass. What happens? The Master makes a single gesture of reconciliation to show he is now committed to his fellows—the scene in which Sir Michael Redgrave buries his hirsute face in Catherine Lacey's throbbing bosom and lets out a succession of agonised roars was, for me, one of the phoniest and most embarrassing moments I have ever had in a theatre. It is a clumsy catharsis which sends many playgoers away from the theatre with a So What? feeling of annoyance.

If I have been harsh on this play, it is only because it pales so considerably in the glowing achievement of "A Man For All Seasons". Mr. Bolt, himself, has admitted he had considerable difficulty with "The Tiger and the Horse"—it was written prior to "A Man For All Seasons"—and despite some splendidly mad scenes from Catherine Lacey and a touching portrayal by Vanessa Redgrave as the Master's daughter, it does not quite come off. Part of this is due to Sir Michael's performance in the key figure of the Master. He is a most pleasing performer to watch when he has a

part he can really sink his teeth into; he is less successful in coping with a characterisation which the playwright has only partially completed, in which the basic "Who" factor is present, but in which the "How", and "Why" elements are left untouched. Perhaps it needs a Paul Scofield to cast the final mould.

Considered as a whole, however, Bolt's three West End plays have shown a marked concern about some of the basic spiritual problems of our age. It would seem that Harold Hobson's prayers for an English dramatist practising in the Christian tradition have been at least partially answered. Mr. Bolt has been reported in various newspapers as being somewhat vague about his faith—that he, himself, is still engaged on a spiritual quest. Be that as it may, Mr. Bolt writes in a Christian context, and he shows an ability, sadly lacking in many of his contemporaries, to see life steadily and see it whole.

JAMES PORTMAN.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST THE KING, LIVERPOOL

Until very recently the considerable programme of church building carried out in this country since the war had contributed virtually nothing to the development of serious modern architecture in Britain. Stripped-Gothic had begun to be supplanted by Ecclesiastical-Espresso, decked out with Festival of Britain light fittings, indoor plants, bright colours and a few "works of art"; church architecture remained essentially pictorial in character. A church was regarded not so much as a building with certain specific (and analysable) functions as a study in composition. Church architecture was largely the preserve of a select circle of "ecclesiastical" architects, the majority of whom were wholly out of touch with the new ideas which have, since the late thirties, transformed considerable sectors of the architectural scene.

Within the last four or five years there have at last been signs of change. Church architecture is beginning to be related to its human and social context; the relevance of theological and liturgical criteria is becoming apparent. The church of St. Paul at Bow Common, in the East End of London, has shown something of the possibilities inherent in a fresh approach to the whole business of designing a church. Here, for the first time, is a church which

exemplifies the radicalism and the readiness to go back again and again to the functional programme and to wrestle with its implications, which Sir John Summerson regards as two of the hall-marks of serious modern architecture in this country.

There were those who hoped that this change in the climate of church building might affect the outcome of the recent competition for the Roman Catholic cathedral at Liverpool. Certainly, the Archbishop's letter, annexed to the official conditions issued in October 1959, gave some ground for thinking that liturgical criteria might play a far more important part in this competition than they had done at Coventry ten years earlier. It was true that the conditions themselves left much to be desired; but that was only to be expected in a country where so little serious thought had been given to the basic problem of church design.

The hopes aroused by the Archbishop's letter were somewhat diminished by the appearance of the *Official Answers to Questions* in January 1960. Competitors were told that the assessors would "look first for a splendid conception". Such words had a familiar ring. The misgivings to which they gave rise among architects who were attempting to design a cathedral church conceived primarily as a pastoral instrument—a building for certain specific communal activities rather than a monument or a grand architectural gesture—were confirmed when the results of the competition were announced last August. Whatever criteria had guided the assessors in their choice of 21 curiously heterogeneous entries for premiation or commendation, it seemed clear that considerations of use or usefulness had played a very minor role. Among the commended designs was one in which it appeared to be impossible to *use* the high altar at all. Another competitor received an honourable mention for "an impressive design" which "would have succeeded as a structure for general cultural purposes".

But the most revealing section of the assessors' report was that in which they gave their reasons for choosing Mr. Gibberd's design. This entry, they wrote, "is full of imagination and powerfully expresses the Kingship of Christ. The conception is itself a crown and the suggestion of the crowning glory of Christ is revealed in the details of the building with logic and restraint. . . . The visitor will be left in no doubt that this is a temple built to the honour of Christ the King". This, it seems to me, lets the cat out of the bag with a vengeance.

The winning design has already been hailed as a notable landmark in church architecture. It has even been compared to Auguste Perret's epoch-making church at Le Raincy. Such opinions seem to be ill-founded. The assessors' statement that the circular plan and central altar of Mr. Gibberd's project meet all requirements "with deceptive ease" is debatable, to say the least. While the plan marks a decisive break with English cathedral tradition, it is open to question whether this is indeed the step forward that some would have us believe. It may well prove to be no more than the substitution of one ill-considered formula for another: a formula which reflects a *simpliste* solution to the complex problem of liturgical participation. The German Liturgical Commission denounced this type of layout as long ago as 1947, on the grounds that it is based on "a widespread through mistaken notion". It is not self-evident that the active participation of the whole Christian assembly in the eucharistic action is facilitated by an arrangement of seating which, as the assessors point out (apparently without irony), is modelled on that of a Greek theatre.

As to the architectural character of the winning design, here Mr. Gibberd has certainly broken new ground with his implied doctrine that form follows dedication. Whether this is a step *forward* is quite another matter: I have already seen a post-Liverpool project for a parish church dedicated in honour of William Temple, where the architectural form of the building seems to have been determined primarily by the desire to raise a monumental figure of the archbishop to a suitably impressive height. The possibilities latent in other dedications provide a fascinating field for speculation. What all this has to do with serious architecture I shall not attempt to suggest

I have little doubt that by 1970 it will be widely recognised that, so far from helping to bridge the present gulf between modern architecture and the Church, the Liverpool assessors gave new life to an approach to church building which is essentially romantic and pictorial, and which is almost totally irrelevant to the real issues which are at last beginning to be faced in this country, as well as on the continent. If, however, the competition does nothing more than underline the need to discriminate between the real thing and the ephemeral products of passing fashion and facile enthusiasm, it will at any rate have served one useful function.

PETER HAMMOND.

La Dolce Vita (*Columbia and Curzon Cinemas*).

Billy Liar (*Cambridge Theatre*).

Existentialists used to say that their philosophy could only be expressed through fiction, since all generalisations about life were impossible; it is only to be appreciated in terms of human beings acting in an actual situation.

This implies that the current philosophy of a period is best deduced from the books, plays and films, which are most popular during it. These represent what ordinary people are thinking, or rather what they are accepting as their patterns of thought. (The people who really *thought* in these terms have almost certainly already moved on further.)

To consider *avant-garde* literature therefore is to risk losing touch with the contemporary pattern, reproducing as this does what prophets thought a generation back. The social student of his own time will do better to consider the paper-backs on the station bookstall, the film that brings queues to the local, and Sunday night on TV.

It is easier today to get evidence of the popular mind than ever before. For one thing, literacy in its simpler forms is almost universal. For another, the demand for TV plays which will hold competitive audiences for a one-night stand has produced a spate of contemporary authors over and above (or perhaps below and behind) the more adventurous ones. The Box in the Corner may not hold up a mirror to nature, but at least it pops a thermometer into the mouth of the average psyche. By paying for what we like we make fairly plain what we are like into the bargain.

Now it used to be said that all serious plays depend upon conflict. Certainly this is true of most of the ones that come to mind. They may represent a conflict of conventional right and wrong, of man against society, or of man against himself. The battle against society may be against tyranny, ignorance, convention—or a combination of any of these. In recent periods, poverty—or the economic system which produced it—can be the enemy.

Today, the new affluence, not to say the new security, deprives playwrights of many of the basic situations of conflict and challenge which once were available. Who is to be the enemy? Is it the older generation, or organised religion, of "the establishment" in some other form? Because it becomes hard to identify the external enemy,

the conflict strikes inwards and produces a mood of anxiety and analysis. So we get a popular art which asks questions rather than makes assertions. Take, for example, two of the most popular entertainments to be seen at present in London.

The first is a film "La Dolce Vita", three hours of orgy amongst Italians of physical and economic opulence. The hero is an outsider. His job as a fashion columnist, is parasitic upon the society to which he clings. But it is a society of desperate boredom, finding in sexual activity alone the assertion of its virility and the occasional moment of truth. If this is the result of affluence, one feels, there is much to be said for celibacy and bread and water. But the film does not suggest any such simple alternative. The one attractive and intelligent character of the whole three hours commits suicide after murdering his two children, whilst the Golden Girl, who appears to symbolise lost innocence, is at the end left abandoned on the far side of a fast flowing channel. This is a moral cul-de-sac, man's discovery that material well-being, even in Mediterranean sunshine, is not equivalent to the Good Life. Who indeed is the enemy—is he after all, within us?

Compare with this "Billy Liar", now drawing packed audiences to the Cambridge Theatre. We laugh at it as our forefathers laughed at the village idiot or a Newgate execution. This is the story of an introvert boy, the only son of a prosperous north country couple. He has retreated into a life of private fantasy which keeps intruding upon reality—and as soon as this happens, he whips back into the snails-shell world of his dreams. Once in the play a girl, who like him knows how to dream, nearly persuades him to share their vision and impose it on the world. (Is this perhaps, the definition of a poet?) She has herself come to terms with life and for a moment it seems that Billy Liar may through her escape his doom. But she fails (or rather he fails her) and we are left to consider, to the sound of our own heartless laughter, how the dream will turn to ashes and smother the dreamer.

What hope does this analysis—which we see repeated in other terms in the plays of Shelagh Delaney and Arnold Wesker—have to offer? None at all. But it does not intend to. It is the doctor's diagnosis of a sick age which has washing-up machines, but no cleansing penitence, stereoscopic pictures, but no vision—credit acounts, but no compassion. And this means that man in general—not the philosopher, the moralist and the poet alone—but the reader,

the viewer, the mass-mind—is becoming aware of his predicament. He sees himself, he recognises and identifies the situation. And this means that he may look for a way out of it. From Greene to Sillitoe, from Faulkner to Wilson, the writers of perception have made us aware that the end of material need is not necessarily the beginning of freedom; we have tried Gods, political and remedies economic; now perhaps someone will speak to us, trumpet tongued, of a divine alternative. We have gained the whole world; we have sampled, at first hand or by proxy, every conceivable experience that the body can offer. Is this the way we shall learn at last that there are worlds to be sought for beyond this one: experiences undreamed of? This ought to be our Christian answer. Why can we not make it? Is it, after all, that we are as uncertain as the dramatists of criticism? They have showed us the moment of desperation clearly and honestly—it is for us to offer a way forward no less clearcut.

STEPHAN HOPKINSON.

Poem

Red blossom in a row of white,
There lies delight.

A gold haired child among the brown
A plane tree blooming in a town,
Catch with surprise
Our wayward eyes.

If beauty springs from contrast,
Tell me then,
Is God the foil for man?

MARGARET BARTHOLOMEW.

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Letters

ABBEY: MUSEUM OR CHURCH

Dear Sir,

It would seem that Mr. Portman who wrote so critically of Westminster Abbey was himself but a casual tourist with a very superficial knowledge of its life. Some of us who are lovers of the Abbey can testify to another side than the one he portrayed. Surely there is no great building noted for its architectural beauty and historic associations that does not naturally draw its crowds of sightseers—people differing widely in character and motives. If many regard it merely as a museum and behave in a distressing manner, it is due to influence surrounding them long before they enter and the Abbey can scarcely be blamed. But I am sure that many stay for the services for better reasons than "to boast to their friends" afterwards, and who knows what they may find —through the beauty of music, through the spoken word, or in the silence? Perhaps still some "who come to scoff, remain to pray". Offensive behaviour during services is, I think, rare, and on the one occasion when I witnessed it the offender was quietly and efficiently removed at once! In chance conversation with two people after recent services, one spoke of the "atmosphere of devotion" that had impressed her, and the other of the "debt she owed the Abbey while working in a London office nearby". I know, too, of Westminster School boys who would speak of it with affection. None who knows the present Dean and Chapter can have any doubts about the emphasis they put both upon Prayer and upon the Ministry of the Word. The Sunday evening nave services and the weekly lunch-hour addresses draw larger numbers of intelligent and appreciative people. In his Installation address the Dean spoke of "the inarticulate prayers that the Holy Spirit is seeking to make articulate", and, affirming the priority of prayer in the lives of the "guardians of the shrine", expressed the hope that they might lead men "at least to the threshold of the quest for Sanctity". Are not our prayers for them and for all who enter the "shrine" more needed than caustic criticism, and likely to prove more effective in solving the Abbey's problems than either of the "solutions" propounded in the PRISM article?

K. F. WATSON

Oxford.

Dear Sir,

R. F. Hall is quite right to point out that the "snot-nosed brats" are God's children. We are in danger of forgetting that. But he fails to draw the obvious conclusion, which is that they must come to God's house *as* God's children. The feeling that "I've paid to see this place and I mean to see it real good" will erect as effective a barrier against God's grace as Satan can construct. This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven; and visitors will be more Gospel-prone if it is, unashamedly, a house of prayer. Westminster Cathedral is just round the corner, and its example is more eloquent than anything I, or anyone else, can write.

There is no need to bar tourists from the Abbey, as James Portman suggests, but for God's sake get rid of ticket-vending machines. We know how Our Lord felt about that sort of thing in Palestine 2,000 years ago. And that, to Him, was only the day before yesterday.

Yours faithfully,

ALLAN D. BUIK

37 Scott Street, Dundee.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Dear Sir,

Psychologists have shown that beating people is in some cases a sexual perversion. R.D. states this in his January comment as if it were a universal law. It is no more a universal law than that *all* women bicyclists are perverts. For example, if one is the parent of five children, and those five children choose an evening when a dinner-party is in session to jump down off a tall piece of furniture in the room above, in quick session, so that pieces of plaster from the ceiling shower down on to the dinner-table, is that parent a pervert if she slips upstairs and rapidly wallops them all—as ours did? Small wonder that a schoolmaster with 20-40 children beats them—is he expected to keep the rest of the class waiting while he subjects the culprit to private psychological treatment?

Yours,

PENELOPE MINNEY

Lambeth.

H-BOMB

Dear Sir,

Brief answers to R.D's seven points in January PRISM.

1 Our present defence policy is one based on fear. It presumes that if this country has H-bombs a potential aggressor would be afraid to attack.

2 Defence is printed in inverted commas because as A. J. P. Taylor has pointed out "far from giving us security (H-bombs) provide the most urgent reason for (an aggressor) to attack us".

3 It is a pious illusion that we spend millions on building bombs that we will never use. Nasser has declared that he is prepared to use the bomb when Egypt gets one. Peace based on mutual fear and suspicion is not peace at all. There must be no margin for accidents and this is a thing we must be sure about for one small mistake is fatal. The most sure way of avoiding nuclear war is not to have nuclear weapons.

4 How skilled are we in diplomacy? We are not. That is why to have a store of bombs and depend on international diplomacy to avoid using them is highly dangerous.

5 Unilateralism cannot change the situation for the worse. If we have no bombs and are attacked, bad luck. If we have bombs, we are told that they will not be used unless we are attacked. But if we are attacked it is too late anyway.

6 The greatest provocation for an aggressor to drop H-bombs is destroy our own nuclear arms.

7 So what?

What illogical perversion of government has developed the strange and hypocritical idea that bombs are weapons of defence? More important, how can a Christian support the building of a bomb either for actual aggression (answer, he can't) or for a peace which is based on a threat to destroy? The Christian is told quite explicitly to resist not him that is evil. Still more fundamental, how can a man who tries to live his life in line with the example of the Cross, say at the same time that he is prepared to kill to defend. And if he does not say that he is prepared to kill to defend, the H-bomb at once ceases to be a deterrent. One feels in agreement with the Quaker Kenneth Barnes in his broadcast talk on "Science,

Poetry and the Incarnation" in which he said "If Christians believe in the use of the H-bomb, it means that they do not believe in their religion".

Yours sincerely,

St. Stephen's House, Oxford. CARL MUNN

Dear Sir,

Mr. Jack Bowles says I didn't ask the crucial question, which is, more or less, how could any Christian permit his country to have an H-bomb knowing it may be used, either aggressively or in retaliation? I didn't ask it because it is a loaded question—it is asked in such a manner that only one answer is permissible. But it contains an unexpressed presupposition, namely that if you have it, it *will* eventually be used. This hasn't always been the case, although there are pretty strong *a priori* grounds for making the assumption. But supposing, just supposing, the Christian came to the conclusion that if his country *didn't* have the use of the bomb someone else would take advantage of the fact to drop one on him or someone else still; but if his country *did* have it then the first someone else would probably *not* drop his bomb—then the Christian must believe his country should have the bomb, because armed neutrality is better than war, because comparative peace *with* the bomb is better than war without it.

What I believe the nuclear disarmers are campaigning about (and here I absolutely agree with them) is that it would be better to be alive under a Communist régime having lost the third world war than to be dead before your time. And I believe that their opponents say that they prefer nuclear death to Communist dishonour. If those are the true grounds of the dispute, then let us have them in the open and not drag in all this stuff about Christianity.

Yours etc.,

London, W.10. ROBIN DENNISTON.

REMYTHOLOGISATION

Dear Sir,

Stuart C. Brown's rejoinder to Rex Walford's article is confusing in its references to "system". It is a little startling to read, first, that Christians "have not got something which must be put across at all costs", questions of "identity" aside. The assertion would seem to wipe out the need for sacrifice-to-martyrdom, and it suggests that Christ may have carried things too far on Golgotha.

Second, his statement that "we are called I believe to renounce our religious systems" results in one asking whether the Incarnation and Atonement are, after all, non-essentials. They *are* points in the Christian "system": is not Mr. Brown arguing against "demythologising" and *for* "denaturing"—a considerably more serious thing? As I understand it, man cannot renounce intellect: if Christ did not deliver a philosophical system, but live a life, that Life yet was a "design". And man, being what he is, will search the design; he will, as Mr. Brown recognises, systematise. He can do no other; he cannot just "live", and such words as "identity", and "encounter", and "redemptive experience", while certainly necessary, are either unsatisfactory (by the Christian "system") or but further illustrations of Mr. Walford's point about the problem of communication, after all.

Man has, as Mr. Brown says, lately evidenced a "loss of transcendence". But it must be recovered. The question is, How? His final sentence points up the real issue, which is that of communication: "For, I suggest, theological language can only be an expression of the redemptive experience and therefore it is only by grace that it can be understood". Yes. We can, then, not originate the grace, but we can, and must, find a language which will more readily let it work than does the conventional terminology.

Mr. Walford correctly, and necessarily, stresses what we need: plays, pictures, TV programmes, poems, novels, films, etc. which "reveal (Christianity's) living truth". For, say, three decades, there have been Christian artists who have known this need and who have tried to meet it. Charles Williams was one who precisely did many of these things, and who would have done more. His work is still not adequately known—either in breadth or depth; but it is gaining ground. Why, though, is it not more widely and better known? In an unusual degree, Charles Williams understood the complexities of the whole question. May not his total effort come to be a kind of Christian-strategic example in communication? May it not indicate that the present special demand upon our Faith be the virtue of patience? And with it, St. Paul's "diligence", and William Faulkner's "endurance"?

Very sincerely yours,
LAWRENCE R. DAWSON, JR.

Colorado.

UNITY

Dear Sir,

May I send my congratulations on the January number.

But the impression given is that the friendly approach between the Protestant and Roman Catholic branches of the Christian Church is of recent growth.

More than half a century ago, in 1906, I was present at St. Andrew's Church, Aigburth, Liverpool, for the funeral of my grandfather, W. F. Taylor, Archdeacon of Liverpool. He was a staunch Protestant from Northern Ireland. The flag of the nearby Roman Catholic Church was flying half mast; and the priest, Father Blanchard, attended the funeral. On enquiry, I was told that the priests used to foregather with my grandfather to discuss ecclesiastical history, on which subject he was well-informed.

London, S.W.1. ERMINE EVANS.

Dear Sir,

In your recent edition of PRISM it was very interesting to read an article by a convert to Roman Catholicism entitled "Look back in Charity". I am likewise a convert—not to Rome, but the Eastern Orthodox Church, and in the process of awaiting my reception into the Orthodox Church (I waited for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years) it struck me that sooner or later one is faced with the same fundamental question—as both Rome and the Orthodox claim that they are the True Church of God, and obviously it is absurd that there are *two* True Churches, and therefore which has the more authoritative claim is in itself a challenge to one's integrity and also to one's powers of reasoning and deduction.

Let it be quite clearly understood that I am not a theologian, but if one is to examine the position in which the Church (at large that is) finds itself today, with all the work which is being done in the fields of Ecumenical activity, one is clear that in the Church of England emphasis has been laid on the spiritual freedom of the individual (one is capable of interpreting the Thirty-Nine Articles in the Prayer Book in more than one way!) in the Protestant bodies, the veneration of the Gospel as being the Living Word of God, and in Rome, the emphasis on the veneration of the Mother of God and the Saints, both of the Old and New Testament, as well as the full Sacramental System of the Church.

In Orthodoxy all these elements are to be found together, not as separated parts as in the West, but as an *integrated whole.* No one part is emphasised upon at the expense of other parts being under-emphasised, the Orthodoxy therefore has the completeness of Faith to which the Anglican and other Western Christians are all gradually realising must come about if the Unity for which we so desire is to be proved a reality. Orthodoxy is so far as I am able to understand it, basic for all time, because it is without doubt the original (if that is the appropriate word) Church from which other Christians have either added or subtracted to or from the vital truths embodied in the Old and New Testament in the Bible, Holy Tradition, and the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church. Thus, if nothing else, Orthodoxy is more simple in its presentation of the Faith, but do not let us get confused between the words "simple" and "easy"—they are not the same thing! Christianity is not "easy" and was never intended to be.

Finally, as your correspondent, I should like to thank the Church of England for giving me a start in life as a Christian, and in an age of ever-increasing material values (bigger and better cars, washing-machines and television sets) I have that much to thank that those values in life, although necessary, are not the things that really count in the long run for eternity.

Yours sincerely,

SUSAN M. RAWLINSON

Beckenham.

Dear Sir,

The cause of Church Unity would surely be advanced if it could be made interesting. PRISM, alas, in the January issue, used the same old wrapping paper: the mystical intensity of Sobornost and the cliché-sprinkled intensity of pan-Protestant ecumania. Inter-Church Aid, the Archbishop's tour, the Octave of Prayer, all these must do more, far more good than forever seeking the subjective satisfaction of Significant Ecumenical Experiences. It was so unusual to find PRISM so dull as this issue was.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE AUSTIN

Dunstable.

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A Sacramental Universe

GEORGE BRASSINGTON

When we meditate upon the Palm Sunday narratives usually our minds are drawn to the "very great multitude" which had come from various parts of the country to celebrate the Passover as a thanksgiving for their nation's deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Taxes had been heavy, the food supply was far from plentiful, the crowd had heard much about this man Jesus and the miracles he had done. Had he not healed the blind, lame, maimed? The rumour was circulating that a dead man had been raised. It seemed odd that he should come upon an ass. Some thought this was because of his poverty, others the mark of his eccentricity, a few saw it as the fulfilment of prophecy. In His presence there was something compelling—garments were thrown before the ass, branches cut down from the palms were waved, throngs pushed around the small party. Here was a man to deliver them from the Roman yoke. This was the expected time. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is God's chosen one, coming to act as God Himself.

Here was a drama, an acted parable, in which each person, incident, creature has a part in the process by which God worked the salvation of men. Rather than seek "spiritual" thoughts from our Bibles we should discover God in the common things described. The masterpiece of art is a collection of details adding up to make a composite whole, so the ass, the crowd, the palms, the garments all have their place in an understanding of the person of our Lord. The victorious entry was upon an ass. The Son of God was born in a stable with animals around, he lived and worked in a carpenter's shop. In His ministry publicans and sinners were his companions, analogies from everyday life the vehicle of his teaching, the highest aspects of family life his joy, and finally bread and wine became the symbols of the divine self-giving. Our Lord blessed the common by association with himself so that it took on a new light. "The Word was made flesh", God had taken the totality of man for His Incarnation that the whole man might be redeemed. As Lossky wrote in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*,

> The world was created in order to participate in the fullness of the divine life—this is its vocation. It is called to make this union a reality in liberty, in the free harmony of the created will with the will of God.

So much medieval devotion lingers on with the idea of the *via negativa*, that we must completely detach ourselves from the world if we are to draw closer to God, yet to quote George Macleod, "unfortunately the via negativa cuts dead across the Emmaus Road". If our understanding of the Lord's Incarnate life is right, He must be found in the ordinary things of life. The whole of life is brought within the sphere of the crucified, risen, ascended Lord where a new unity and meaning is revealed. Modern evangelists often err in trying to bring men to a decision by pointing to their need for a Saviour, to liberate them from sin. God becomes dependent upon men's sin for His entry into the heart. In a pastoralia lecture I heard that the point of visiting was to *bring* a man to Christ. God is no stranger to the heart of man but is already there working, and such conclusions compel us to accept a belief in a general revelation. Then we do not bemoan the fact that a particular spiritual experience is outside the vision of most people, but point to the things they value as being reflections of God's activity. Here we are helped by the Orthodox doctrine of the "divine energies" which teaches of a sacramental universe through which the transcendent God can be discovered.

The recognition of this truth leads to a fresh understanding of the sacraments of the Church. The entry into Jerusalem marked the beginning of the climactic conquest of death and sin for all mankind. We enter through Calvary into His Kingdom. Like the ass we are tied, but have been loosed by the Lord for "He hath need of us", buried into His death and risen in Him through our baptism. We may be an object of mockery as the ass, but we are to find joy in the menial tasks. Hereby we have a part in the divine drama. Rightly the Liturgical Movement has emphasised the Body of Christ, that being "In Christ" means a new unity with fellow Christians achieved at its highest in the Eucharist. Again the Lord takes that which is ordinary in our lives and through the offertory of bread and wine, the first fruits of creation and a thanksgiving for His blessings, we present the week's events and work. We receive the Body and Blood to build up our totality of body, soul, mind, sharing in a meal of fellowship with Our Lord and one another.

In that strength a new value appears in the apparently meaningless and we are conscious of the ever-present God. The ministry of the Word must be similarly related to life. How often lay-people claim that the sermon bears no relevance to their trials in the world, in home, factory, school! The most scriptural sermon I ever heard left a feeling of bewilderment in the congregation as text followed text. Our Lord used the world around Him for examples and analogies to point to the eternal realities. When preaching is incarnational new channels are provided for the Word to quicken, awake, convict.

Church life must have this spirit breathing within it in a common concern for one another, in which a man's faith comes out of incubation and ceases to be individualistic. The basis of such conduct lies in love for God and His creatures. We cannot love God without in great measure sharing our faith with other people so when one brother suffers all suffer. "See how these Christians love one another", it was said in the early ages. How frequently old people complain they are forgotten by fellow-worshippers as soon as illness prevents their going to church. The Body of Christ must be outward-looking to the world, not to increase the numbers on the Electoral Roll, but as the natural consequence of believing. Derek Tasker in *The Church and Young People* points to the primary task of removing the heresies in most of their minds, not by talking religion but living it. So a piece of service, as in visiting the lonely, doing tasks for the bedfast takes on a sacramental character: this is a language the paganised masses understand. Many outside the Church begin by loving first His creatures: these we must point to the God who creates, loves, sustains and is the only true motivation for such conduct.

A new light comes to bear on the sphere of work, and for much constructive thought on this we are indebted to the Iona Community, in which production becomes an exercise of creativity and an expression of worship. The same truth bears fruit in the family which becomes the essential unit of the Church where an understanding of God's use of the common can be discovered through self-sacrifice, respect, penitence amongst and between its members. MacLeod summarises this well by saying:

> "In visiting the shepherds now you do not wait in awful silence to hear them mouth religious phrases as proof of their membership nor do you dismiss as small talk their plain words. In every activity of living, in all the holiness of their care for children,

in the toys they make and the sacrifices they undergo for them you have heavenly conversation."

A new sense of the presence of God is achieved by recognising continually in apparent coincidences and deeds of generosity the hand of God. The pleasures of life become those which are the most simple and permanent, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it from solitary confinement, "In every way life in prison makes one return to the simplest things in life". Christian asceticism and renunciation becomes a joy. Humility results from the realisation that He is working in others and we begin to love people who are awkward or who do not agree with our views. We are more careful about our speech which is seen as a sacred trust to be used to His glory. Nothing stands outside the sphere of God's love as too defiled for His concern and attention: this spirit encourages new endeavours of identification with the lot of others for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord was no easy weight for the ass to carry, so it is that Christians bear at times a heavy cross, yet because of the humility of the Son of God this suffering can be transformed into a victory. Increasingly we are aware that we are partaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, awaiting its consummation by walking to the new Jerusalem destined for those who love Him. Christ is our King and High Priest in his interceding and reigning eternally at the right hand of the Father. In our faith a note of urgency results. "Straightway ye shall find . . . straightway he will send", it was said of the acquisition of the ass. The time for discussion and argument is past for the will of God has been revealed for our acceptance. We have been set free from the bonds of self, sin, pride to find a new liberty as sons of God. The Jews longed for the Messiah: so their desire for God and our own yearning for Him find their satisfaction in this meek and lowly king.

We will be resuming Sister Edna Mary's articles on Prayer in May.—Ed.

PRISM PERSONALITY: 4

ROBIN DENNISTON

Robin floated into PRISM's ken by being, firstly, the influential church tycoon whom the first two editors approached to pull the strings of a bursar's money-bags; and secondly, the displaced-looking person whom the third editor found himself next to at a committee of church tycoons and whose farouche and sympathetic appearance alone prevented him, the third editor, from disappearing across Vincent Square in panic.

Which shows that Robin is a man of parts—an employee of two publishing companies, the organiser of a TV programme, a lay reader, a reviewer of books, a church organist, a music critic, an inspector of theological colleges. His dress often reflects this versatility—the odd socks, the smart city trousers, the shirt that looks like (and is) a reject from the parish jumble sale. Perhaps like other quick-change artists, he just doesn't have enough time between each turn.

Robin became an honorary editor of PRISM long before his name appeared on the title page—sitting on the floor below us in Tufton Street and still pulling his strings—not now only of the money-bags and of the hearts of nervous visitors, but getting Established Churchmen to write for PRISM and encouraging others to write attacks on Established Churchmen. For it is Robin's unique achievement to have become, successfully and genuinely, both a father-figure and an *enfant terrible* at the same time—a G.O.M. of the A.Y.M.; or perhaps, because he still pretends to be a bit mixed up, a Grand Young Angry Old Man.

TIME & TIDE

Did you see last week's issue of TIME & TIDE? If so you will have been struck by MARTIN JARRETT-KERR'S remarkable photo-feature on the origins of *King Kong*, FATHER HUDDLESTON AND THE JAZZ BAND. You will also have been impressed by the scope of the LENT BOOKS SUPPLEMENT.

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Printed by Oxley & Son (Windsor) Ltd., 4 High Street, Windsor